

ABC NIGHTLINE

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BELL: Good evening. I'm Steve Bell, and this is Nightline. The alleged CIA mining of Nicaraguan harbors, is it international terrorism of collective security, and were members of Congress informed in advance? We'll talk live tonight with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jean Kirkpatrick, also with two senators on opposite sides of the issue, Patrick Leahy of Vermont and John East of North Carolina. And we'll have a report from Nicaragua.

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ANNOUNCER: This is ABC News Nightline, substituting for Ted Koppel and reporting from Washington, Steve Bell.

BELL: The House Foreign Affairs Committee joined the Senate today in condemning alleged CIA involvement of the mining of Nicaraguan harbors. Specifically, it's a non-binding resolution to deny funds for the mining operation. However, House leaders say the implications are far greater. It could be the end of all covert aid for anti-Nicaraguan rebels. Joining us tonight from New York to discuss this growing controversy the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick. Madam Ambassador, so far the government has been unwilling to say specifically whether or not we are involved. Can you elaborate on that tonight? JEANE KIRKPATRICK (U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.): No.

BELL: Then let us take it hypothetically if we could please. Assistant Secretary, or Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam said this afternoon, when given a hypothetical question, that the U.S. in fact would have a right to mine harbors in the fashion which is alleged because, he said, it would be an act of collective security. Could you explain what this means? KIRKPATRICK: Well, certainly. Actually, under the United Nations charter and under international law generally, nations have a right to engage in collective security or individual security, acts that respond to armed attacks by other nations. Now the point about this all is that Nicaragua has been engaged for a long time, years now, in armed attacks, determined, consistent, continuing armed attacks against her neighbors, against El Salvador particularly, but also her other neighbors. That's a finding that is very well understood. And those other nations simply have the right to defend themselves and to ask others to help them defend themselves. That's the point.

BELL: Joining us live now in our Washington bureau, Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy, of Vermont, a member of the Intelligence Committee. Senator Leahy voted in favor of the resolution condemning the use of U.S. funds for the mining of Nicaraguan waters. And joinings us from the Senate gallery, Republican Senator John East, of North Carolina. Senator East was one of only 12 senators who supported the administration and voted against that resolution. Senator Leahy, let's try to put one thing on the record. Were the appropriate members of the Congress informed that the U.S. was supporting and in fact involved in the mining of the harbors? SEN. PATRICK LEAHY (D-Vt.): There still seems to be a great deal of dispute about that. I felt that I'd been adequately informed about what was going on prior to the time of the votes last week, when this matter was first debated in the Senate. I thought at that time that most other senators had. I find now that a lot of senators in both parties, including many in leadership positions, felt that they had not been, had not been informed. The administration argues that back and forth. But I'm, I'm satisfied that a, a large number of the senators, both parties, had not been adequately informed.

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